

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
October 6, 2008**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, October 6, 2008, at 2:00 p.m. in the School Administration Office, Chatham, Virginia.

Eighteen (18) schools were represented. Also present were Mr. James E. McDaniel, Division Superintendent, Dr. John W. Amos, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, and Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology.

The Superintendent called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. The purpose and protocol for the meetings was discussed. The purpose of the meeting is to allow the opportunity to discuss school division issues and seek feedback from the Council representatives. School issues should be addressed with the principal of the school. The Council representatives also have the opportunity to provide topics of discussion for their respective schools or the school division. Representatives were encouraged to e-mail topics for placement on the agenda to the Superintendent or to Mrs. Janet Hancock, Clerk of the Board (james.mcdaniel@pcs.k12.va.us or janet.hancock@pcs.k12.va.us). It was noted that the minutes from the Advisory Council meetings will be posted on the homepage after each meeting.

The following Council topics were discussed:

1. A question was raised about the possibility of offering support for teachers for the VGLA. Specifically, it was requested that regular education and special education teachers be provided opportunities to meet together for planning and collaboration in meeting the needs of the students.

Mrs. Wanda Vaughan, Director of Assessment and Accountability, and Dr. Jeff Early, Director of Special Education, have met with groups in the schools to discuss the appropriate use of the VGLA. They have stressed that the collections of evidence must be a collaborative effort between regular and special education teachers. The Virginia Department of Education is concerned with the appropriate use of the VGLA. Pittsylvania County Schools interprets VGLA participation with the same rigor as set forth by the Virginia Department of Education. In order for a student to take the VGLA, there must be documented evidence that the student is currently performing on grade level and because of the disability cannot demonstrate that he/she knows the material in a multiple choice format. There has been no plan to have teachers from different schools (special education and regular teachers) to come together to develop

evidence for the VGLA. Staff will review the possibility of providing this opportunity. Mrs. Vaughan and Dr. Early would be available to schedule a time to meet with any faculty that may have questions relative to the use of the VGLA.

2. A question was raised about the possibility of having more even distribution of disabled students among the schools. Some schools have a large number of disabled students, and some schools have very few or none. It was suggested that schools with a higher population of disabled students receive additional staff.

Even if additional teachers could be hired, there is no space for more classrooms. These situations are reviewed each year. A clarification was provided on the definition of a cross-categorical class, which is a class that provides instruction for more than one special education disability.

3. A proposal was discussed at a meeting of the Virginia Board of Education relative to not fully fund the Standards of Quality. These Standards need to be fully funded. A question was raised about how this may relate to Pittsylvania County Schools and if there will be any changes in the school budget that may require the elimination of personnel.

At this time, it is not known what the budget will be for the 2009-2010 school year. Information should be available from the Governor in December. The Standards of Quality allows 35 students in a classroom. The Pittsylvania County Schools' classrooms have less than 35 students in the elementary grades. The school division employs more individuals than are required in the Standards of Quality. If the State cuts funding for positions mandated by the SOQ, there may be positions that are not filled in the next budget year.

4. A question was raised about the possibility of having four-day work weeks during the school year.

Next summer the operating hours for the school system will be 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Monday – Thursday. The school system will close on Fridays and only work a 4-day (40-hour) work week. There are many benefits of the 4-day work week. Child care may be a major factor. There are additional issues that would need to be reviewed and considered for a 4-day school week, such as remediation for students, providing 990 instructional hours instead of attending school for 180 school days; possibility of cutting salaries by 20% or freezing salaries. Bus drivers and cafeteria workers would work less hours. It would be necessary to provide presentations to the community individuals and parents prior to implementation in order to build support and answer questions. At this time, it is not anticipated that there would be a move to a 4-day student week.

5. A concern was expressed relative to having too many appreciation weeks. It was suggested that some of these weeks could be consolidated.

Announcements of various recognition weeks are included in the Superintendent's Minute because people had stated that these had not been mentioned before. These announcements are not intended to have people digging in their pockets for gifts. It is a communication issue to let people know that they are acknowledged in a positive way. There is a possibility that some of these weeks could be combined.

6. Concerns were expressed about the leaks at Gretna Middle School, the clocks that are not working properly at Gretna Middle School and the water fountain on the Grade 7 hallway that is not working. Maintenance requests have been submitted; however, these issues have not been addressed. It was also suggested that shades or blinds needed to be installed in the multi-purpose room (cafeteria) to block the sunlight.

Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, will check on the clocks and the water fountain at Gretna Middle School. It was noted that Tunstall Middle School had used flags, which were donated by the PTO, over the windows in the gym to show a presentation. Black trash bags have been used to cover the windows. Mr. Johnson also stated that the middle school leak situation was a work in progress.

7. A concern was expressed about the inconsistency of the enforcement of the attendance policy at the high schools. A request was also made for clarification on whether attendance should be counted by classroom or the school day.

The attendance policy states that medical documentation may be requested after a child is absent seven (7) days. The principals have the autonomy to make decisions relative to attendance. Attendance has been defined and established for the schools to provide consistency for students being recognized for perfect attendance. Principals also have the authority to recognize students for exemplary attendance or excellent attendance (these would be above and beyond perfect attendance). This issue will be reviewed with Mrs. Ann Cassada, Director of Secondary Education, to determine what the high schools could do to bring about consistency in the schools.

8. A request was made to have a teacher on the Technology Advisory Council. Specifically, after the panic created last year relative to the possible discontinuing of Blackboard, the concern was that teachers needed to have more input in the software purchased and implemented for the schools.

Originally, there were three (3) teachers on the Technology Advisory Council. The teacher's avenue is the Information Technology Resource Teacher (ITRT). Currently, there is one (1) teacher on the Advisory Council. The funding received for technology is limited on how it can be used. There is still a possibility that Blackboard will be discontinued. The cost for using Blackboard is approximately \$28,000. A new program, Moodle, may replace Blackboard. The Information Technology budget is not expanding to meet the costs that are needed. It was suggested that if there are concerns, contact should be made with the appropriate ITRT or Mr. Rickey Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology.

9. In light of the pending State budget cuts, a question was raised about the possibility of cutting teacher salaries.

It is anticipated at this time that there will be no cuts in the 2008-2009 school budget. However, it is not known what the budget may be for the 2009-2010 school year. Governor Kaine has stated that he will try to protect K-12 education as much as possible. Before any cuts are made in the 2009-2010 budget, the school division was scheduled to receive only about \$800,000.00 in new funding which would be required for mandated salary increases. It is not anticipated that salaries or positions would be cut for next year. Additional information for the current budget year should be received in the next two weeks. Information relative to the 2009-2010 budget should be received in December.

10. A request was raised about an icon on the computers in the labs. The program is called NCS Mentor.

The NCS Mentor is a writing program. The English lead teachers met with Mrs. Ann Cassada, Director of Secondary Education, and were asked to provide the information to the other English teachers at the schools. This program is a very valuable tool for teachers to learn how the State scores the writing SOL tests. By using this program, teachers have the opportunity to practice scoring students' papers. If there are teachers who are not familiar with the program and do not know how to use it, please contact the Instructional Department.

Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, addressed the following issues:

1. A copy of the 2009-2010 budget calendar was provided. This calendar will be presented to the School Board at its October 14, 2008, meeting for approval. Individuals are provided an opportunity to present budget priorities to the School Board at the following meetings: November 11, 2008, December 9, 2008, January 29, 2009, and March 24, 2009.

2. Chatham Elementary School has six (6) new classrooms which have helped with the overcrowding issue at the school. Other schools will be reviewed for overcrowding issues to determine if additions are needed. Renovations and additions for the four (4) high schools will begin this year. Preliminary drawings of the renovations and additions were viewed and discussed. Bids have been sent out to be received and opened on November 4, 2008, at 2:00 p.m. for Gretna High School and Chatham High School and on November 6, 2008, at 2:00 p.m. for Dan River High School and Tunstall High School. A pre-bid meeting will be held on October 21, 2008. It is anticipated that construction will begin on the projects in December or January to be phased in over the next 2½ years. Completion is expected by August or September of 2010. Teachers were informed that they will be inconvenienced during this time because of having to move classrooms and the possible lack of internet services when renovations begin.

Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, addressed the following issues:

1. A staffing update for the 2008-2009 school year was provided. A listing of the specific positions that were filled for the year was distributed. There were approximately 120 new employees hired for the 2008-2009 school year. There were 182 positions filled because of retirements, transfers or individuals leaving the division for various reasons. Approximately 40 teachers retired at the end of the 2007-2008 school year.
2. A comparison of teachers' salaries within surrounding school divisions was provided. The school division is very competitive at the beginning of the scale; however, the division is not competitive at the top of the scale. The Salary Taskforce will be meeting on Thursday, October 9, 2008, to begin discussing any recommendations for employee's salary scales and other salary issues for the 2009-2010 school year.

Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology addressed the following item:

1. A new program, Power School, will replace SASI at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. This web-based product, which meets the State criteria for a student information system, will be provided by Pearson to the school system at no cost. The program includes parent portals that allow the parent to view the student's grades and report cards. This is a fully integrated system. Scheduling will begin in Power School in January with the full program to be in operation beginning in the fall of 2009. This program will require a new level of security because the students cannot have access to the passwords.

Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, addressed the following items:

1. All eighteen schools have met the Virginia Standards of Accreditation for the 2008-2009 school year based on the test scores from the 2007-2008 school year. A celebration banquet to recognize the work of the staff has been scheduled for Thursday, October 16, 2008, at the Averett University's North Campus, Danville, Virginia. All staff members have been invited to attend. The final accreditation status for all schools was provided.
2. A listing of the testing windows for the locally developed school division assessments was provided.
3. The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report for the schools and the school division was provided. Not all of the schools made AYP, and the school division did not make AYP this year. The schools are working on school improvement plans to review the issues and areas that need to be addressed. It is now time to begin to approach instruction differently to ensure that the students' needs are being met. A breakdown of the sub-groups and the rankings of the schools was included for review.
4. On-time graduation rates were discussed. The rate for graduates of 2008 will be released on October 8. A formula has been developed by the State to be used to determine the on-time graduation rates. The expectation is that when a student enters the ninth grade, they should graduate in four (4) years. There are allowances made for English language learners, students with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), students who transfer in or out of the system and students who pass away during the school year. GED and ISAEP completers are not counted as on-time graduates; however, all other students receiving any type of diploma are included in the count for on-time graduation rates.
5. The school calendar for the 2009-2010 school year was discussed. The traditional holidays have been placed on the proposed calendar; however, the Calendar Committee will discuss other pertinent dates for make-up days and teacher work days. The Council representatives were asked to gather input from staff and provide any suggestions or concerns for the proposed calendar to Dr. Lillian Holland. It was noted that there are School Board members who have expressed concerns about releasing students for early dismissal days. Teachers should be reminded that the purpose of these early dismissal days at the end of each six weeks is to provide the opportunity for input of grades and necessary work in the classrooms. If these ½ day opportunities are to be continued, the teachers need to ensure that the days are being used for the appropriate intent. Teachers should show professionalism and take advantage of the opportunities for planning and other classroom duties.

Dr. John W. Amos, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services addressed the following items:

1. A listing of available flu clinics was provided. Employees were encouraged to take advantage of these clinics.
2. The inclement weather guidelines have not changed for the 2008-2009 school year. A copy of the guidelines has been provided to the principals for distribution to each staff member. The division will continue to post all closings and delays on the website and will use the AlertNOW system and the area radio and television stations for announcements.

The Superintendent addressed the following items:

1. Appreciation was expressed to ALL staff members for their contributions, efforts and support in meeting the Standards of Accreditation. Everyone has a part in this accomplishment. By 2014, the challenge for all school divisions will be to have 100% of the students proficient in all areas of the Standards of Learning tests.
2. Chatmoss Cable is working with the school division to provide air time for public relations programming. The Instruction Department, the Pittsylvania Career-Tech Center and the Regional Alternative School have been highlighted. The program is also available for viewing on the homepage (see Crossing Pittsylvania video). The schedule for additional shows include the following:

November 24, 2008	Information Technology Brosville Elementary School Stony Mill Elementary School
January 26, 2009	Human Resources Tunstall Middle School
March 23, 2009	Business Tunstall High School Chatham High School
May 18, 2009	Support Services Twin Springs Elementary School

It is anticipated that all schools will be highlighted in the future. The schools and the division need to continue to use the vehicles that are available (AlertNOW, the *Lamplighter*, Media Advisory Committee and WBTM radio) to continually say that Pittsylvania County Schools is “A Great Place to Learn and Work.”

3. Council Representatives were encouraged to talk with principals to see if time may be available to discuss these items at a faculty meeting in order to ensure that the staff is more effective and may add value to the school system.

The Superintendent asked if there were any suggestions on how to improve this meeting. No comments were provided. Council representatives were asked to e-mail the Superintendent if there should be any comments or suggestions.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.